

Hi, Fred Nelson for Community Comment,

Have you looked at your sample ballot yet? Measure "Z" is a one half cent sales tax proposed by the County of Humboldt for the purpose of maintaining and improving public safety and essential services with many prominent people endorsing a "yes" vote. There is no ballot argument against the measure, so what's the problem? For one, it is another tax. For another, the impartial analysis of "Z" states that the sales tax is a general tax and the money can be used for "any legal governmental purpose". No one is stating how much is being earmarked for this or that problem. Every department head will be clamoring for their "fair share" (whatever that might be). Supposedly an "Oversight Committee" will be appointed. Oversight Committees are worthless. They have no authority and can only make suggestions. Will a portion of the money end up in increased salaries? Both timber and fishing industries have declined with other private industries fluctuating in a weak economy but the County employment flourishes and taxes continue to grow. Do you realize the average county employee is paid an annual salary of \$67,000 plus full benefits and retirement? The average private sector employee, according to 2010 California statistics, is about \$30,000 and may or may not include benefits or retirement. Have there been any impartial studies or reviews of county staffing and supplies and services before entertaining a tax increase? The number of Humboldt County employees increased by over twenty positions from 2012 to 2013. The County of Humboldt has one employee for every sixty residents with an outlay of \$95,817,454. The County of Shasta has one employee for every Seventy Three residents with an outlay of \$85,614,005. Presently, the State levies a 7.25 % sales tax. Trinidad has a one percent transaction and use tax. Arcata has a .75 % tax along with a 45% Utility Tax for those exceeding 600% of energy baseline allowances. Eureka's Measure "Q" extends the One Half Cent sales tax for another five years. Blue Lake is proposing Measure "T", a Four percent Utility Users Tax. Both Rio Dell's Measure "U" and Fortuna's Measure "V" propose a one cent sales tax. All these taxes, if passed, would remove about Twelve Million dollars from our purchasing power and place it in government hands. County salaries are presently set according to a labor agreement. How soon are labor negotiations again due? How large is the county vehicle fleet and is the size warranted? How many properties does the county rent from private owners and could the number be reduced? There are too many questions and not enough answers for me to support Measure Z.

Fred Nelson for Community Comment.